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AUTHOR	Miller, Marc S.; Fleegler, Robert
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ABSTRACT

Venture capital provided under the School to Work Opportunities Act 1994 (STWOA) has promoted significant state and local innovation. STWOA's 7-year lifespan assumed that states made a commitment to building sustainable systems when they applied for funds. As STWOA approaches the end of its lifespan, many states are examining and assessing their own and other states' STW initiatives. The following state-level strategies for sustaining STW practice and priorities have emerged: (1) integration of STW with education reform; (2) career-centered curricula; (3) staff who promote and enhance work-based learning experiences; (4) shared governance among state agencies; (5) advocacy by high-level public officials; (6) a focus on employer engagement; and (7) organizing the constituency for state action. The following six broad categories of strategic decision points in formulating state strategies to sustain STW have been identified: (1) the state's level of commitment to sustaining activities previously supported by federal STW dollars; (2) ways the state defines STW goals and principles; (3) the resources being provided by the state to support STW implementation and sustainability; (4) state policy levers advancing activities started under the federal grant; (5) the parties administering the state's STW effort; and (6) the activities that the state is trying to sustain. (MN)

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SCHOOL TO WORK INTERMEDIARY PROJECT

ISSUE BRIEF

STATE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING SCHOOL-TO-WORK

MARC S. MILLER AND ROBERT FLEEGLER

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SCHOOL-TO-WORK INTERMEDIARY PROJECT

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STATE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING SCHOOL-TO-WORK

By Marc S. Miller and Robert Fleegler, Jobs for the Future

Venture capital under the School To Work Opportunities Act of 1994 has promoted significant state and local innovation. This Issue Brief highlights state strategies for sustaining these initiatives after federal resources under the act are no longer available.

Since 1994, the School To Work Opportunities Act has promoted the efforts of states and communities to enhance the relationships among stakeholders in education, workforce development, and economic development. It has also supported the growth of local, state, regional, and national intermediaries linking schools and workplaces, as well as provided significant funding for the creation of local school-to-work partnerships.[1] With more than 1,300 partnerships operating, an impressive infrastructure has been created for connecting schools and students with workplaces and other community resources.

What will be the future of this infrastructure and particular school-to-work initiatives when federal "venture capital" ends? The legislation's seven-year life span assumed that states made a commitment to building sustainable systems when they applied for funds. States are now examining their initiatives and assessing their own strategies and those of other states as the act comes to the end of its life span.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FROM THE STATES

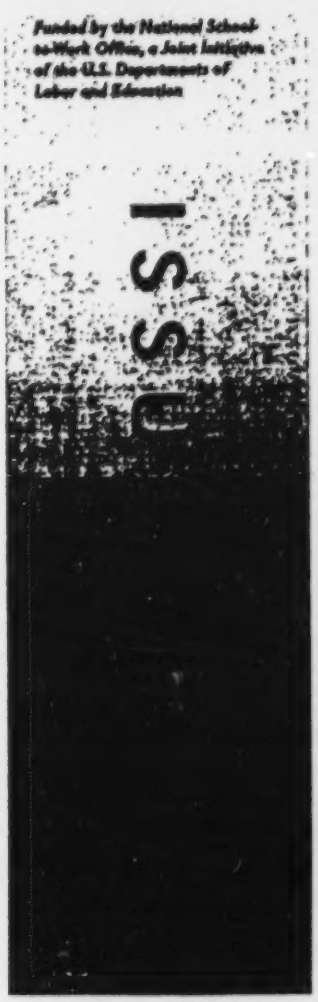
Just as the states have emphasized diverse approaches and priorities in investing their federal school-to-work grants, sustainability strategies vary widely as well. In its 1998 report to Congress, the National School-to-Work Office reported: "States are taking steps to sustain their School-to-Work systems by realigning resources, enacting legislation, and putting in place state policy and/or statutory code."

This Issue Brief focuses on how states are addressing a number of shared critical questions, which are summarized on Page 2, "Critical Decision Points." While much activity has occurred locally as well, highlighted here are selected state-level strategies to sustain school-to-work practice and priorities through:

- The integration of school-to-work with education reform;
- Career-centered curricula;
- Staff who promote and enhance work-based learning experiences;
- Shared governance among state agencies;
- Advocacy by high-level public officials;
- A focus on employer engagement; and
- Organizing the constituency for state action.

Integration with Education Reform: New Jersey and Maryland

For *New Jersey*, the passage of federal school-to-work legislation coincided with the



2. STRATEGIC DECISION POINTS

In illustrating the diversity of state strategies to sustain school-to-work, this Issue Brief suggests that six broad categories of question underlie decisions about how best to proceed. These same questions would apply when evaluating the successes—and challenges—that arise during the implementation of a state's sustainability strategy.

What is the state commitment to sustaining activities previously supported by federal school-to-work dollars? States differ in how highly they value activities generated under the federal grant.

How does the state define school-to-work goals and principles? Most often, states view school-to-work as a way to encourage all students to achieve at high levels. However, some implement it mainly to reinvigorate technical and vocational education, and others to engage employers in helping youth enter the labor market. Such distinctions affect a state's commitment to sustaining school-to-work and the strategies it uses to preserve what it considers most valuable.

What resources does the state provide to support school-to-work implementation and sustainability? Resource allocation is a litmus test of commitment. Does the state allocate new funds or redirect or rename existing funds? While few states are investing the scale of resources received through the federal act, dedicated allocations provide practitioners with resources and an endorsement.

What state policy levers advance activities started under the federal grant? Levers could include new legislation, administrative policies, and interagency coordination. Some states use executive powers to coordinate agencies and promote school-to-work. Even without new legislation or new funds, coordination from the governor, the chief state school officer, or the state-level boards required by the 1998 Workforce Investment Act can realign resources and policies in ways that sustain school-to-work.[2]

Who administers the state's school-to-work effort? Governance often reflects a state's definition of school-to-work goals and principles. Is governance located in the vocational education office? The heart of the education department? The workforce or economic development agency? Is it a shared responsibility? Such decisions have political import when it comes to fighting for resources.

What activities does the state try to sustain? Some states argue they can best sustain school-to-work efforts by integrating its elements into other reforms, particularly new learning standards. Others target particular elements that would not be sustained without focused, statewide action. These two broad strategies appear to characterize state sustainability efforts in general.

approaching resolution of a decades-long court battle over urban school funding. As a result, New Jersey has implemented school-to-work as part of its emerging strategy for improving education for all young people.

School-to-work principles are integrated into the New Jersey Core Content Standards, issued in 1996 and tested in state assessments. Seven core content standards apply specifically to academics, while five workplace-readiness standards form a structure for work-based learning. The Core Content Standards reflect the Comprehensive Education Improvement and Financing Act of 1996, along with follow-up legislation that builds upon its foundation. *(For more information on New Jersey, see the Department of Education Web site: www.state.nj.us/education.)*

Like New Jersey, ***Maryland*** seeks to sustain progress in linking school and work through integration into state-level education reform. The state has been particularly systematic in moving to infuse school-to-work principles into its standards-driven education-reform effort.

Maryland is integrating school-to-work "into all aspects of the education system," using key school-to-work tenets as "a resource to expand on earlier state initiatives." For example, it is integrating academic and vocational education, linking school-to-work with economic development through work-based learning and career clusters, and introducing assessments focused on generic skills—such as learning, thinking, communication, technology, and interpersonal skills—that join school-to-work with standards-based reform.[3]

Day-to-day leadership of Career Connections, Maryland's school-to-work initiative, is housed in the Department of Education, a factor that proponents consider to be crucial to reaching K-12 educators. Yet the Career Connections State Management Team brings together education, workforce development, and economic development to promote close alignment among these areas. State-level

school-to-work services are funded from various streams that do not depend on the federal school-to-work grant, which mainly goes to the local activities.[4]

At Career Connections' core are regional partnerships for education, workforce preparation, and economic development. Through 12 Local Labor Market Teams, educators, labor, employers, parents, students, and other community leaders come together to improve curricula, expand career development, and help students make informed choices about academics, careers, and postsecondary education.[5] Locally, School Improvement Teams are responsible for integrating Career Connections into the schools. *(For more information on Maryland, see the Department of Education Web site: www.msde.state.md.us.)*

Career Majors and Coordinators for Work-Based Learning: West Virginia

West Virginia is unusual in the state's leverage over schools, combining several sources of federal and state money to provide well over half the funding for the 55 districts. The state uses this influence in implementing the 1996 Jobs Through Education Act, SB 300, which seeks to connect learning and work as part of a framework for improving education for all students.

SB 300's goals, guidelines, and accountability measures include key school-to-work principles, and subsequent legislation further details the framework by enhancing local accountability and clarifying the implementation of career clusters and career majors. Among other things, SB 300 requires the creation of an individualized transition plan, connected to a career major, to help guide parents and students. The plan begins by the end of the student's eighth grade and continues, with adjustments, to the first year after graduating from high school.[6]

Starting with the class of 2003, SB 300 also requires a work-based learning experience as a high school graduation requirement. Thus far, West Virginia has awarded funds from the state's federal school-to-work grant to about half its high schools to support a work-based learning coordinator. To receive such funds, the school must show how the local system will sustain the position after one year. In addition, a district-level staff person coordinates work-based learning and school-to-work activities in about two-thirds of the 55 school districts.[7] *(For more information on West Virginia, see the Department of Education Web site: www.wvde.state.wv.us.)*

Career Preparation: Michigan

Michigan's Career Preparation System (CPS) directly incorporates school-to-work priorities and emphases into academic and vocational instruction, with support for stu-

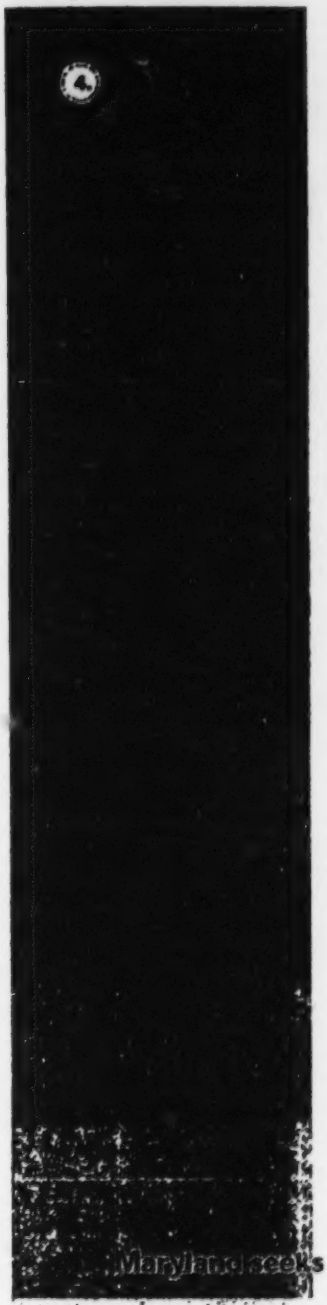
Legislative Levers: Encouraging Employer Involvement

In 1999, the National Conference of State Legislatures concluded that "[a]lmost half the states have passed laws supporting school-to-work."[8] Today, that number is above 30. Many of these laws seek to encourage employer involvement.

A number of states offer tax credits to businesses that participate in a school-to-work partnership or apprenticeship program. For example, *Michigan's* Registered Apprenticeship Tax Credit for High School Students addresses a perceived barrier to employer participation in workplace learning. It subsidizes the cost of training youth at the worksite, up to $2,000 annually per student, and covers employer-paid classroom training.

Iowa legislation established guidelines and criteria for a "Certified School-to-Career Program" that introduces a high school student to an industry through summer internships and school-based learning at the secondary and postsecondary levels. In effect, the program offers a young person the opportunity for customized training in a particular career, with the employer providing financial support for the student's higher education; after completing his or her education, the student must return to work for that employer or repay these expenses.

Iowa is also one of a number of states that has enacted legislation to limit employers' financial liability for students injured in the workplace; Hawaii has gone further, amending its occupational safety laws that govern students in the workplace.[9] School partnerships appear to be better positioned to attract businesses in states addressing this often-voiced business concern; conversely, the failure to do so presents some employers with a reason not to participate.[10]



dent educational development plans, teacher internships, and work-based and service learning. Education Advisory Groups for each region's Workforce Development Board selected fiscal and coordinating agencies, and the state committed $23 million dollars to fund school districts' CPS activities in its first year (October 1998-September 1999) and an additional $23 million the second year.

In its fifth and final year of federal school-to-work funding, Michigan is now transitioning to the new system and has received a supplemental federal grant.[11] The goals for the coming year all reflect a school-to-work framework. For example, the first goal is to develop an integrated career development system though local, regional, and state industry-education partnerships. Another goal specifies the establishment of a competency-based career development system that integrates academic and skills standards.

The Michigan Department of Career Development, a new workforce development agency, is developing and administering the CPS. Its mission is to help workers find jobs and help employers recruit and train skilled workers. In addition, the department will work with K-12 schools and community colleges to establish a statewide career preparation system that enables all students to research occupational opportunities. *(For more information on Michigan, see the Department of Career Development Web site: www.state.mi.us/career.)*

Maryland seeks to sustain progress in linking school and work through integration into state-level education reform, particularly the state's standards-driven reform effort.

Shared Governance Among State Agencies: Iowa

Iowa divides responsibility for the components of the school-to-work system among three departments: Education, Economic Development, and Workforce Development. The departments collaborated in planning and implementing school-to-work; they are now responsible for developing common definitions and goals and a systemic approach for utilizing multiple resources to sustain the work initiated through federal school-to-work funding. The legislature has appropriated about $1 million for these agencies to continue their supportive efforts after the federal grant expires next year, including funds for employability assessments, implementation tools, professional development, and school improvement.[12] All three departments are part of Iowa's School-to-Work Administration Team.

Employer engagement is central to Iowa's plans to connect education and state workforce and economic development programming. The Iowa Association of Business and Industry, a member of the Administrative Team, has identified skills leading to standards and benchmarks. The association also provides teachers with professional development in conducting "Occupational Site Audits" and using these to connect workplace learning with classroom learning, as well as in making connections with academic standards.[13]

Iowa's 1995 Career Pathways Program Act established an organizing framework for integrating school-based and work-based learning; it also provided funds from the federal school-to-work grant for local partnerships to develop career pathways and model curricula.[14] As in Maryland, interagency cooperation promotes sustainability through linking education and workforce development initiatives, the ability to blend various funds, clear connections to state school-improvement initiatives, and a heightened sense of local ownership.[15] *(For more information on Iowa, see the Web sites of the Departments of Education (www.state.ia.us/educate), Economic Development (www.state.*

ia.us/ided), and Workforce Development (www.state.ia.us/government/wd), as well as the AIBI (www.iowaabi.org).

High-Level Advocacy for Work-Based Learning: Wisconsin

Wisconsin is focusing on a particular school-to-work element, in this case, work-based learning. What is notable in Wisconsin is that a top official—Governor Tommy Thompson has been a strong advocate for school-to-work. Governor Thompson, like Michigan Governor John Engler, has been prominent nationally in efforts to sustain school-to-work initiatives and integrate them into broader reforms in education, workforce development, and economic development.

As the end of federal support approached, the Wisconsin legislature voted to establish the Governor's Work-Based Learning Board to administer and coordinate school-to-work and work-based learning efforts.[16] The board's seventeen-member composition reflects the value the state places on work-based learning: it includes the governor, public instruction superintendent, technical college board president and director, workforce development secretary, and workforce excellence administrator. Among the other members, the governor appoints seven, including representatives of business, organized labor, the public, and secondary vocational education and work-based learning.

In contrast to Iowa, where three departments share school-to-work tasks, the Wisconsin board combines the work-based learning programs of three agencies: the Departments of Public Instruction and Workforce Development and the Wisconsin Technical College System. The board, which is independent, is responsible for both existing and new programs, including youth apprenticeship programs, Tech Prep programs funded by the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, work-based learning programs for TANF-eligible youth, and state and federal school-to-work programs for at-risk youth. Over the biennial budget period, the board will administer about $22 million in state and federal funds. *(For more information see the web site of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development: www.dwd.state.wi.us/cew.)*

Engaging Employers: Massachusetts

Anticipating the decline and eventual end of federal school-to-work funding, *Massachusetts* Regional Employment Boards and other school-to-work advocates proposed the creation of a state fund to sustain activities that connect employers and schools to create work-based learning for students.

The Massachusetts School-to-Work Connecting Activities Act, enacted in 1997, provides local partnerships with funds to staff organizations that perform this intermediary function. The state contributes up to one dollar for every two dollars that private-sector employers pay in student wages for structured work-based learning experiences.

School-to-Work Governance: Lessons for Sustainability

In their 1999 report to the National School-to-Work Office, Bari Anhalt Erlichson and Carl E. Van Horn offered states three major lessons for implementing and sustaining school-to-work initiatives:[17]

- Develop and maintain effective leadership and capacity at all levels;
- Pursue policy support from the state legislature; and
- Make every effort to establish and maintain clear and consistent messages and practices during the implementation of school-to-work programs.

The Massachusetts School-to-Work Connecting Act, enacted in 1997, provides local partnerships with funds to staff organizations that connect schools and workplaces.

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This funding helps sustain the efforts of intermediary organizations to connect employers with school-to-career initiatives throughout the state. With a $5 million appropriation in FY 2000, the fund supports 100 job coaches who help prepare youth to benefit from work-based learning experiences, train employers to work with young people, and serve as a bridge between workplaces and school personnel. In these efforts, over 10,000 students and 3,900 employers use the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan, which articulates tasks, skills, and goals for the student and adds structure to the internship.[19] *(For more information on Massachusetts, or to download the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan, see the Web sites of the Office for School to Career Transition (www.doe.mass.edu/stw) and the Boston Private Industry Council (www.bostonpic.org). See also "The Massachusetts School-to-Work Connecting Activities Act" on the School-to-Work Intermediary Project Web site: www.intermediarynetwork.org.)*

Organizing for State Action: California

In *California*, which has several remaining years of federal funding, school-to-work advocates are mounting and coordinating local efforts to impact state decision-making. The goal of this campaign is to move the state to replace the federal role in school-to-work.

A grassroots committee has begun building support for state-level action to promote and fund key school-to-work principles and activities, illustrating the potential for influencing states to plan ahead and make commitments to sustain the best of school-to-work. The California School-to-Career Policy Network, representing all 47 local partnerships, wants the state government to "provide leadership to both enable and catalyze an expansion of School-to-Career opportunities to all students."[20]

The network has developed a briefing paper for partnerships to use as a vehicle for raising local awareness of the benefits and elements of a school-to-work system. This grassroots activity parallels one of the priorities of the state school-to-work office: changing attitudes and perceptions during the remaining two years of federal funding.[21] *(For more information on California, see the California School-to-Career Net: www.stc.ca.gov.)*

Promoting School-to-Work: Recommendations to States

Jobs for the Future recently issued *What's Next for School-to-Career?*[18] This report made a number of recommendations relevant to states that want to sustain school-to-work efforts in the current political and policy environment:

- Focus on high schools.
- Foster closer ties between K-12 and postsecondary institutions.
- Promote school-to-career principles within new education and workforce development reforms.
- Fund intermediaries that manage long-term school-community partnerships.
- Fund and disseminate research on quality program design and implementation.

School-to-work's reforms of education, workforce reforms, and economic development systems do not occur automatically. Ultimately, a state's "sustainability track record" depends on leadership.

CONCLUSION: LEADERSHIP AND INTERMEDIARIES

Will states continue school-to-work initiatives and priorities, sustaining promising innovations seeded with federal funds? In answering that question, states are focusing on the features that each feels best meet its needs and those of its communities. As a group, though, the diverse strategies described in this Issue Brief tend to emphasize one of two general approaches. All the states profiled here

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have made a commitment to sustaining the best of recent experimentation through: 1) *integrating* school-to-work pedagogy and principles into other education reforms; and/or 2) *targeting* support to promoting employer engagement, work-based learning, and career exploration.

New Jersey and Maryland, for example, have integrated contextual learning and community connections into other education reforms. The National Conference of State Legislatures reports that many states are achieving the goals of integration through "higher standards for all, regular assessments, elimination of tracking, applied learning, integrated curricula, work-based learning, career exploration and connecting activities with important partners like business."[22] States pursuing integration typically make a trade off, though: in sustaining core school-to-work components, they run the risk of losing a distinct school-to-work identity.

"States pursuing comprehensive goals are the most likely to reap large benefits from the STW initiative," Rutgers University researchers Bari Anhalt Erlichson and Carl E. Van Horn have noted in a report prepared for the National School-to-Work Office. "However, they are also the states with most at risk as well if the initiative does not succeed." Erlichson and Van Horn concluded that sustainability efforts were more likely to succeed in states that align school-to-work with education reforms and that connect it with other workforce development policies and programs (see the box on Page 5, "School-to-Work Governance: Lessons for Sustainability").[23]

Efforts in Massachusetts and Wisconsin illustrate the second approach: targeting specific school-to-work practices that are valuable and popular—yet appear unlikely to be sustained without state action. Frequently, this targeting strategy seeks to sustain progress in engaging employers to promote workplace learning and school-employer connections. This strategy may be particularly useful for local organizations that serve as intermediaries, convening and connecting key partners in workplaces and schools.

Regardless of whether a strategy is best characterized as integration or targeting—or some combination of the two—a state's "sustainability track record" ultimately depends on leadership. School-to-work reforms in a state's systems for education, workforce development, and economic development do not occur automatically. In some states, the governor or legislature, pushed forward by school-to-work advocates, has been the driving force. In others, progress has emerged due the efforts of local stakeholders and practitioners who recognized school-to-work's power.

In either case, the task of sustaining school-to-work is ongoing. The scale and scope of state efforts will depend, to a significant extent, upon the support for and advocacy of state activities by schools, businesses, intermediaries, and other stakeholders after the federal initiative ends. As this Issue Brief demonstrates, many states have introduced legislation, allocated resources, and taken steps to continue school-to-work activities. How effective these efforts are at the local level—and how deeply they take root in the coming years—can be influenced by committed and creative businesses, schools, and other stakeholders. In many communities, intermediary organizations are well positioned to convene and organize those stakeholders so that a state's efforts are as significant in practice as they appear to be in legislation or executive proclamation.

The School-to-Work Intermediary Project

The School-to-Work Intermediary Project is designed to strengthen and raise the public profile of local, state, regional, and national organizations that connect schools, workplaces, and other community resources.

www.intermediarynetwork.org

Jobs for the Future
88 Broad Street, 8th Floor
Boston, MA 02110
(617)728-4446

New Ways Workers National
785 Market Street, Suite 950
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415)995-9860

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Endnotes

[1] No new federal School-to-Work grants will be made after September 2001, but a state has up to five years to expend its award, and each state is eligible for a one-time supplemental transition grant.

[2] For more information on the Workforce Investment Act and school-to-work efforts, see "School-to-Career Partnerships and Youth Councils" on the School-to-Work Intermediary Project Website: www.intermediarynetwork.org.

[3] Bari Anhalt Erlichson and Carl E.Van Horn. 1999. *School to Work Governance: A National Review.* Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania, pp. 13-14.

[4] Telephone interview with Katharine Oliver, Assistant State Superintendent, Maryland Department of Education, January 21, 2000. A 1999 effort to enact legislation to fund the Local Labor Market Teams stalled, and no new bill is likely to come before the legislature for two years. A supplemental federal grant will fund the Local Labor Market Teams in FY 2001, but state funding will become crucial in FY 2002.

[5] NSTWO. "1998 Maryland State Profile."

[6] Stephen Hamilton and Agnes Hamilton. 1999. *Building Strong School-to-Work Systems.* Cornell Youth and Work Program and the NSTWO, p. 85.

[7] Telephone interview with Ron Grimes, Executive Director, West Virginia Office of School-to-Work, January 25, 2000.

[8] NCSL. March 1999. "School-to-Work: Past and Future." *WorkNotes.* This includes all eight of the original implementation states.

[9] NCSL. March 1998. "School-to-Work: Past and Future." *WorkNotes.*

[10] Erlichson and Van Horn, p. 25.

[11] NSTWO. "Draft 1999 Michigan State Profile."

[12] Telephone interview with Laurie Phelan, Director, School-to-Work Office, Iowa Department of Education, January 24, 2000.

[13] NSTWO. "1998 Iowa State Profile."

[14] NSTWO. "Draft 1999 Iowa State Profile."

[15] Erlichson and Carl E.Van Horn, p. 11.

[16] "Wisconsin Governor Proposes New Board To Oversee State-Run Programs." *Employment and Training Reporter,* June 9, 1999, pp. 684-685.

[17] Erlichson and Van Horn, pp. 27.

[18] Richard Kazis and Hilary Pennington. 1999. *What's Next for School-to-Career?* Boston: Jobs for the Future, pp. 34-38. To download copies, go to the Jobs for the Future Web site: www.jff.org.

[19] NSTWO. "Draft 1999 Massachusetts State Profile."

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[21] NSTWO. "Draft 1999 California State Profile."

[22] NCSL. March 1999. "School-to-Work: Past and Future." *WorkNotes.*

[23] Erlichson and Van Horn, p. 27.

For Additional Information

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